

# **MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 2, 2004**

Chief Darrel Fournier called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:00pm in Room 438 of the State House, Augusta, Maine. Members present were Michael Albert, Jack Berry, Representative Patricia Blanchette, Jay Bradshaw, Chief Jeffrey Cammack, John Cannon, Art Cleaves, John Dean, Representative Robert Duplessie, Chief Darrel Fournier, Albert Godfrey, Sr., Edward Johnston, Geoffrey Maker, Senator Richard Nass, Harty Norris, Charles Soltan, Leslie Wiles (for Bill Williams), Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (staff). Representative Thomas Bull was excused and Senator Bruce Bryant, Chief Jethro Pease and David Wacker were absent. Vicki Schmidt and Bruce Hensler of Maine Fire Training and Education and Earle Welch, Jr., Wayne Assistant Fire Chief, attended the meeting as guests of the Fire Commission.

***A motion by John Cannon, seconded by Mike Albert, to accept the minutes of January 5, 2004.*** The motion passed unanimously. (Please note that later in the meeting, members were notified of the correct title for the Lakes Region Mutual Aide Company, Inc., and the minutes will be corrected.)

The Fire Commission welcomed Charles Soltan as its newest member. Charlie will represent the insurance industry on the Fire Commission.

## **Reports of Committees**

The Training Facilities committee met this morning prior to the Fire Commission meeting. The committee reports that it has completed the initial analysis of the survey and expects to present a final draft of the report to the Fire Commission at the March 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

The Spring Conference (Blaine House Conference on Emergency First Response) committee distributed a copy of the brochure (hard copy attached) for members to review and make comments and corrections. Members learned that Maine Municipal Association (MMA) will print and mail the brochures, as well as provide the conference nametags and registration duties. Mailing lists from the Maine Chiefs Association, Maine Emergency Medical Services (MEMS) and Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) were used. Final costs for the printing and mailing costs are estimated at \$400.00. A sixth choice (F.I.R.E. Act, Federal Grants for Local Responders) was added to the original five workshops. Members were encouraged to be available as facilitators and help as needed. Governor Baldacci will present the three Fire Commission "Best Practices" awards at the conference luncheon.

## **Old Business**

The Fire Commission's report (copy attached) on the issue of the use of lights and sirens on the personal vehicles of volunteer emergency responders was delivered to the Transportation Committee in January. The Transportation Committee also held a meeting on February 10<sup>th</sup> on the lights/sirens issue. The Fire Commission was informed that the Maine State Police would be submitting legislation to clarify the language regarding the placement of blue lights. The proposed language would clarify that blue lights would be placed in the rear of the vehicle and would shine to the rear only, rather than rotating.

The Fire Commission discussed permanent funding of the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO), Maine Fire Training and Education (MFT&E), health care and recruitment/retention. Much of the discussion focused on the State's General Fund and how the impact of fire protection services affect all the people of Maine and the need for a long-term stable funding source, i.e., the General Fund. Members learned the General Fund saw an increase as a result of the readjustment of insurance costs. Discussion continued on the Fire Investigation and Prevention Tax (FIPT), premium tax and projections. The Fire Commission agreed that many critical questions remain including:

- Who pays each tax and what percentage do they pay?
- Who isn't paying?
- Bureau of Revenue Services-trends and projections

Members agreed the discussion has to continue regardless of the economic problems of the State and that a strong case can be made that it is critical for every entity in Maine, tax paying or not, to have proper fire insurance and well-trained personnel for protection. Therefore funding for the SFMO and MFT&E should come from the General Fund. The Fire Commission members, who also serve in the Legislature, agreed to work on draft legislation proposing the SFMO and MFT&E be funded through the General Fund. In addition to looking at the draft language at the March meeting, the Fire Commission will review revenue numbers for the FIPT and the premium tax.

The Fire Caucus of the Maine Legislature is still in the planning stages. The initial meeting is tentatively scheduled for sometime in February, either before the legislative session or during lunchtime.

The Fire Commission will take public comments at the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on the truss construction issue. Members expect to submit legislation regarding this issue during the 122<sup>nd</sup> Legislature in 2005.

Fire Commission members (D. Fournier, J. Cammack and J. Cannon) met with representatives of the Governor's office and the administrator of the Dirigo Health Plan on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Three major issues were discussed-

- Joining with state employees as part of their health plan
- Including firefighters and EMS as part of the Dirigo Plan
- Actuarial study by a nonprofit organization to determine costs and benefits

Injury rates and the costs associated with an aging fire service will be requested from the Department of Labor and forwarded to the Governor's representative. Another meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

### **New Business**

Fire Commission members discussed the former Maine Yankee site in Wiscasset as a possible location for a state fire training academy. Members considered a number of issues including the size of the site, whether existing structures could be redesigned for use by the fire academy and whether the Maine Criminal Justice Academy has the ability to share space with the fire service. Members agreed it was critical to explore all options and seek alternatives.

***A motion by Steve Willis, seconded by Ted Johnston, for the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to move forward with discussions regarding the former Maine Yankee site in Wiscasset as a viable option for the Maine State Fire Academy. The motion will direct the Fire Commission to also seek discussions with representatives of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine Criminal Justice Academy regarding options for the fire academy as part of a comprehensive plan.*** The motion passed unanimously.

The Governor's appointment to the Fire Commission remains vacant although members learned a nominee might soon be appointed.

Fire Commission members discussed state wide mutual aide for emergency response and a composite of what exists in other states will be emailed prior to the March meeting.

Fire Commission members agreed to the following meeting schedule:

<b>Monday, March 1, 2004</b>	<b>1:00pm</b>	<b>Room 438, State House</b>
<b>Monday, April 5, 2004</b>	<b>1:00pm</b>	<b>TBA</b>
<b>Monday, May 3, 2004</b>	<b>1:00pm</b>	<b>MEMS</b>

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, Chief Fournier adjourned the meeting at 2:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette